



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
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### **North Dakota Observes National Cervical Health Awareness Month** *State Health Department Stresses Importance of Detecting Cancer Early*

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of National Cervical Health Awareness Month, the North Dakota Department of Health is urging women to schedule their regular Pap test, according to Mary Ann Foss, state coordinator of the *Women's Way* program for the Department of Health.

Although cervical cancer is highly preventable through screening and other preventive measures, about 3,700 women in the United States die from the disease each year. Having a Pap test is the key to preventing cervical cancer. About 50 percent of women who are diagnosed with cervical cancer have never had a Pap test. An additional 10 percent of cervical cancer occurs in women who have not had a Pap test in the last five years.

"Unfortunately, many women do not get Pap tests because they are uninsured or underinsured," Foss said. "The good news is that the state's *Women's Way* Program, which is available to eligible North Dakota women, may help these women pay for their Pap tests."

*Women's Way* is North Dakota's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. Since its inception in 1997, *Women's Way* has provided screenings to 9,029 North Dakota women, resulting in the detection of 749 cervical abnormalities and 11 cervical cancers.

"The main cause of cervical cancer is the human papillomavirus (HPV), the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States," Foss said. "Fortunately, a vaccine is now available for young women from the ages of 9 to 26 that can help protect against the two main types of HPV that cause cervical cancer. Women who have been vaccinated, however, still should get regular Pap tests."

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To learn more about *Women's Way*, call 1-800-44 WOMEN or visit [www.ndhealth.gov/womensway](http://www.ndhealth.gov/womensway). For more information about National Cervical Health Awareness Month, contact Mary Ann Foss, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2333.

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